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## *Jackson Resident Leads Award-Winning Air Guard Unit*

**By Tech. Sgt. Barb Harbison, 108th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs Office**

Virtually every unit thinks they are the best, but when they get an award naming them "Outstanding Unit" – everyone knows they are the best. And the best Civil Engineer Unit in the Air Reserves for 2008 is part of the New Jersey Air National Guard.

The 108th Civil Engineer Squadron, 108th Air Refueling Wing, received the 2008 Major General Robert H. Curtin Award for the Air Force Outstanding Civil Engineer Unit Award – Air Reserve Component Category. The Squadron had also received the 2008 Col William L. Deneke Outstanding Civil Engineer Unit Award from the Air National Guard.

Commanded by Lt. Col. Paul Novello, of Jackson, N.J., the squadron is comprised of more than 90 Airmen and 18 civilian employees. These men and women fill the trades of builders: electricians, plumbers, heating and air conditioning technicians; heavy equipment operators; pest management; and, readiness activities: nuclear, biological and chemical detection and decontamination and disaster response. To be named the Reserve Component Civil Engineer Squadron of the Year, the 108th CES had to toot their own horn about all the great things they had accomplished in fiscal year 2008.

An ongoing project since the 2005 BRAC, has been the new missions and reorganizations of the 108th ARW. The CES has been working hard to upgrade and renovate the facilities for the wing's new missions. Plus, they have been aggressively working to meet requirements of McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst megabase.

"I could not be prouder of the accomplishments of the men and women of the 108th CES," said Lt. Col. Novello. "I am very happy for the unit to get some well earned recognition. While this award covers a period of time, CE has in the past, and always will give it our all, and strive to be the best. I am honored to be a part of this team."

While work was bustling at their home base at McGuire Air Force Base, more than one-third of the squadron volunteered for AEF deployments to Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar. A 40-person team went to RAF Mildenhall, England for several weeks to work on construction projects, including erection of a security fence, five facility renovation projects and excavation and regarding an area in support of an archeological dig. During the summer of 2008, 30 members of the squadron deployed to Croatia for two weeks for a humanitarian mission during the 2008 Adriatic Aurora exercise. The Airmen worked with a civil engineer unit of the Croatian Army to construct a playground for the local school and replace a roof on the community center.

Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, commander of the 108th Air Refueling Wing, said, "As changes in missions and personnel have occurred in the Air National Guard, and particularly the 108th ARW, during the past few years, the 108th Civil Engineer Squadron has consistently shown its strengths. These men and women certainly deserve this award telling the rest of the Air Force that they are the best of the best."